

By: Thompson of Harris

H.R. No. 351

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, Former governor Mark White passed away on August 5,
2 2017, at the age of 77, leaving an admirable legacy of visionary
3 leadership; and

4 WHEREAS, Elected to the state's highest office in 1982,
5 Governor White worked tirelessly to address a number of challenging
6 issues, including the diversification of the Texas economy and the
7 implementation of comprehensive education reform, and his
8 achievements have had an important and lasting influence on the
9 Lone Star State; and

10 WHEREAS, The son of Sarah Elizabeth White and Mark White Sr.,
11 Mark Wells White Jr. was born in Henderson on March 17, 1940, and
12 grew up in Houston; the focus he would later place on education
13 stemmed in part from the influence of his mother, who taught first
14 grade; after graduating from Houston's Lamar High School, he worked
15 his way through Baylor University, where he earned degrees in
16 business and law; and

17 WHEREAS, In 1966, Mr. White began his career in public
18 service as an assistant attorney general, and in that role, he
19 handled some of the state's first consumer protection
20 investigations; he then became a partner in private law practice in
21 Houston before being appointed as Texas Secretary of State by
22 Governor Dolph Briscoe in 1973; just 32 years old when he took
23 office, he worked to modernize the state's voter registration
24 system, and after five years on the job, he ran for attorney

1 general; though considered an underdog, he triumphed in the 1978
2 Democratic primary and went on to win the office in the November
3 election; his ability to defy the odds in political races was
4 repeated four years later, when he challenged incumbent governor
5 Bill Clements and was elected as the state's chief executive; and

6 WHEREAS, Over the course of his tenure, Governor White was
7 able to win support for a number of groundbreaking initiatives; his
8 bold education reforms, highlighted by House Bill 72 enacted in
9 1984, included pay raises for educators and funding increases for
10 property-poor school districts, as well as the establishment of
11 class size limits and teacher competency tests to improve
12 elementary schools; he also intensified the focus on student
13 achievement, championing the landmark no-pass, no-play policy that
14 required students to pass all of their classes in order to
15 participate in school sports, and he demonstrated similar resolve
16 in securing funding for school and highway improvements; to
17 diversify a state economy that had been prone to wrenching
18 boom-and-bust cycles, he spearheaded the recruitment of a major
19 research conglomerate, Microelectronics and Computer Technology
20 Corporation, setting the stage for Austin's emergence as a
21 high-tech center; and

22 WHEREAS, After leaving office in 1987, Governor White
23 returned to the private sector, continuing his legal practice in
24 Houston and serving GeoVox Security as its chair; moreover, he
25 shared his expertise and commitment to service as a member of the
26 boards of the Baylor College of Medicine, the San Jacinto Monument
27 and Museum of History, the Armed Forces Foundation, and the Texas

1 Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum, and he chaired the Houston
2 Independent School District Foundation; the school district
3 appropriately named an elementary campus in his honor in 2014, and
4 his numerous other accolades included a Distinguished Alumnus award
5 from the Baylor Alumni Association and Baylor University's Pro
6 Texana Medal of Service; and

7 WHEREAS, Governor White shared a long and happy marriage with
8 his college sweetheart, the former Linda Gale Thompson; he was the
9 proud father of three children, Mark, Andrew, and Elizabeth, and in
10 later years, he delighted in the company of his nine grandchildren;
11 and

12 WHEREAS, Gregarious, collegial, and charismatic, Mark White
13 loved the give-and-take of politics, but he was guided above all by
14 an unwavering sense of responsibility to the people of Texas; he
15 embraced Sam Houston's admonition to "do right and risk the
16 consequences," and his commitment to caring and principled
17 governance will remain a source of inspiration for years to come;
18 now, therefore, be it

19 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 85th Texas
20 Legislature, 1st Called Session, hereby pay tribute to the memory
21 of the Honorable Mark White and extend sincere condolences to Linda
22 Gale, their children, and all who mourn his passing; and, be it
23 further

24 RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be
25 prepared for his family and that when the Texas House of
26 Representatives adjourns this day, it do so in memory of Governor
27 White.